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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 00833-86
21 February 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT: Patterns of Problems for the Soviets in the Third World

1. I have had a chance to discuss with NIC colleagues and SOVA the interesting question you raised about possible patterns among problems faced by the Soviets in the Third World. We do see some limited patterns, but believe that any implications of real benefits for the US from these developments are probably some way down the road.

2. The PDRY rebellion is now the sixth Marxist-Leninist state to face internal rebellion. This is the most important pattern overall and one the Soviets will be increasingly forced to deal with this kind of problem.

- The Soviets have no ideological category by which even to describe this phenomenon of anti-Marxist rebellion. Typically the USSR can only call them remnants of reactionary factions or outside interventionists. Nonetheless, those in charge of Third World ideology--particularly in the International Department of the CPSU--will have to come to terms with this phenomenon.
- Chances are--at least in ideological terms--that these states will long remain excluded from the Soviet category of "true socialist countries." It would be a source of major embarrassment if they were ever accepted as true socialist states only to be shaken by internal revolution.

3. The PDRY incident also demonstrates to Moscow's regional clients that the commitment from Moscow is highly limited:

- These leaders face the prospect of overthrow at any point when a more pro-Moscow faction should move against them.

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- Moscow clearly is much more interested in the state than in the leadership of the state. Leaders can come and go, but Moscow really cares about the real estate and the establishment of vanguard ruling parties and their hold on power.
- Unlike Moscow, Third World leaders typically place immense emphasis on personal relations with other leaders; hence, the immediate spark of sympathy for former President Hasani from Mengistu, Qadhafi and even Assad.

4. While the bad news for Moscow was that many of these leaders expressed sympathy for Hasani and not the rebels, they all moved back into line fairly quickly when so instructed by Moscow. Thus, while the leadership of these pro-Moscow client states may be unreliable and ideologically flaky, the basic system held: these states can ill afford to back away from Moscow and the precedent for a reversal has yet to be set.

- Nonetheless, I find it intellectually untenable to accept that Marxist-Leninist leaderships cannot be reversed--but no winning combination of local circumstances and timely outside intervention has yet to be put together to bring about a reversal.

5. Moscow's ideologists probably will not be truly surprised by these incidents in PDRY. Many of them have had skepticism about the ideological purity, commitment and stability of these states all along. Nonetheless, they are a relatively cheap investment and Moscow is unlikely to back away from seizing Third World opportunities when they arise.

- There has been ongoing debate in Moscow for many years however about the value of Third World adventures--especially between the party's International Department and those who are more interested in detente and East-West relations. Questions of cost have also been raised and probably will be again in a period of declining finances.
- Moscow also will face these classic problems of Marxist conflict whenever two neighboring hostile states both fall under Communist domination. The hostility continues and Moscow ends up having to choose. China and Vietnam is the first such example of this.

6. In short, these anti-Marxist rebellions are a generic problem for the expansion of Soviet power and establishment of Marxist client states. These problems will probably grow more rather than less severe with time. The greatest hope is that when one or two such states one day

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will have collapsed, Moscow will move toward a greater sense of realism and back to the classic rules of international power politics: "You win a few, lose a few." Tensions between the US and the USSR could be reduced considerably if the win-a-few-lose-a-few-rules should become more common. Moscow may otherwise find the Brezhnev doctrine increasingly embarrassing--if not dangerous--since it commits them to the principle that they can never allow a state to slip out of the Marxist-column and into the Western one.

7. Further personnel changes in the Foreign Ministry and international department of the CPSU are underway and possibly could portend fresher Soviet thinking on this topic and perhaps greater fluidity.

8. The numerous interesting projects currently under way in SOVA (the outside look at anti-Soviet insurgencies) and in the OGI Instability Branch (Anti-Soviet Insurgency Quarterly) should have opportunities to explore these issues on an ongoing basis in the months ahead.

Graham E. Fuller *for*
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